

# CHRISTEL HOUSE ACADEMY

## SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT #4 DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE



2717 South East Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46225

Phone: (317) 783-4690 • <http://www.christelhouse.org/academy>

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**This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:**

- Christel House Academy's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at Christel House Academy
- Detailed Description of Christel House Academy's Programs and Activities (as provided by the school)

# 2005



# CHRISTEL HOUSE ACADEMY

## DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE

### STUDENTS

#### Christel House Academy

# A

#### ENROLLMENT AND DEMAND

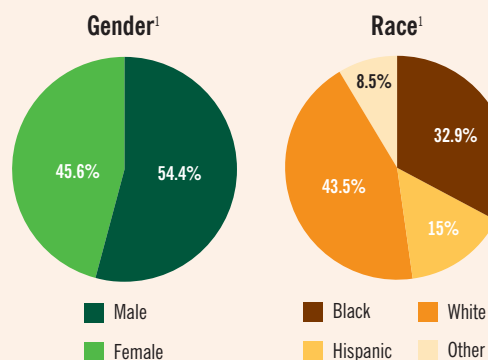
	2004-05	At Capacity
Grades served	K-6	K-8
Maximum possible enrollment, pursuant to charter	346	860
Number of students enrolled <sup>1</sup>	340	N/A
Number of students on waiting list <sup>2</sup>	110	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ <sup>2</sup>Source: School self-report of data, as of August 1, 2005. ■ N/A denotes "Not Applicable." A school may elect to maintain a smaller overall enrollment than that allowed by its Charter with the Mayor's Office. Actual enrollment may exceed the maximum enrollment stated in the Charter by 10%. It is possible that a school may have a waiting list but not be fully enrolled because waiting list figures are aggregated across grades; some grades may be fully enrolled and have waiting lists while others do not.

#### Christel House Academy

# B

#### STUDENT COMPOSITION



	Christel House Academy
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch <sup>1</sup>	60.9%
Special Education <sup>2</sup>	13.5%
Limited English Proficiency <sup>3</sup>	12.9%

<sup>1</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ <sup>2</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2004. ■ <sup>3</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported March 2005. ■ See main report for comparative data.

### PERFORMANCE

The section below describes Christel House Academy's (CHA) performance over its third school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance Framework may be viewed on-line at <http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Accountability/2005/home.htm>.

In some areas, this section also provides information about the school's performance in 2002-03 and 2003-04 as compared to its performance in 2004-05. For additional information on how performance has changed, view the *2003 and 2004 Accountability Reports on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools*, also available on-line at the website listed above.

The Mayor's Office conducts evaluations of school performance using a variety of measurement tools, including visits by a multi-member site evaluation team, independent surveys of parents and staff, and expert analysis of standardized test score data. Each section of the following text notes the specific tools used. Supplemental Report 12 contains a complete description of evaluation mechanisms used to prepare this report.

# IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

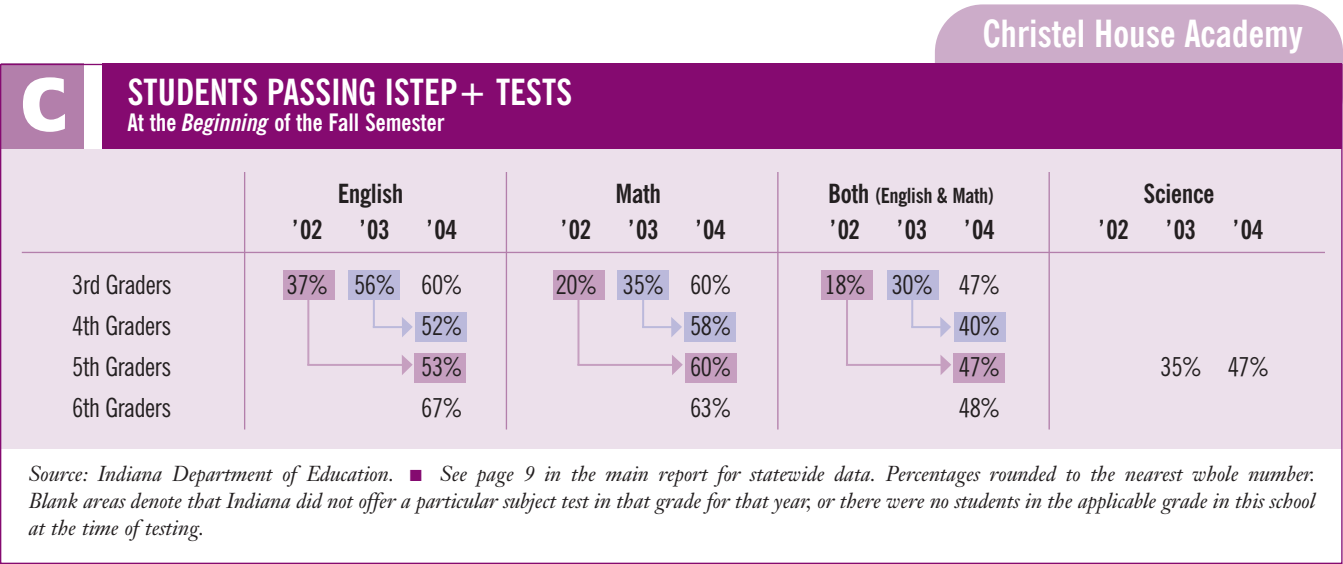
## IS THE SCHOOL MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY ACADEMIC PROGRESS, AS MEASURED BY THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

### Performance on the statewide assessment

■ **CHART C** displays the percentage of CHA 3rd through 6th graders who received passing scores on ISTEP+ examinations in fall 2004 and, where applicable, the percentage passing in 2002 and 2003. It is not possible to use these results to measure individual students' progress over time because each grade's test results pertain to different students in 2002 and 2003 versus 2004. However,

simple comparisons of the percent passing give an indication of general student performance trends at the school. The arrows in this figure compare the percent passing in a particular grade as it progressed to the next grade (e.g., how 3rd graders in 2003 performed as 4th graders in 2004 and how 3rd graders in 2002 performed as 5th graders in 2004). For example, 56% of 3rd graders passed the English ISTEP+ in 2003, while a comparable 52% passed as 4th graders in

2004. A much higher percentage of 4th graders passed the math ISTEP+ in 2004 as compared to their 3rd grade results in 2003; the same trend is evident in the rates of those passing both English and math. As ISTEP+ continues to be administered in all grades, the Mayor's Office will be able to determine how much progress individual CHA students make on these tests over time.



## Adequate Yearly Progress

CHA made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005, as determined by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires the IDOE to

determine AYP for each public school in Indiana, including charter schools in operation during the 2003-04 school year. The IDOE determines whether each school makes AYP based on the percentage of students who were enrolled

in the school for a full year that passed the English and mathematics ISTEP+ tests. In addition, each elementary and middle school must raise or maintain high attendance rates. ■ **CHART D** below shows CHA's AYP determinations.

### Christel House Academy

**D**

#### ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

As Determined by the Indiana Department of Education

Overall Determination: Yes	English	Math	Attendance	Participation Rate <sup>1</sup>
All students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Black, not of Hispanic origin	Yes	Yes		Yes
White, not of Hispanic origin	Yes	Yes		Yes
Free/reduced-price lunch	Yes	Yes		Yes

Source: Indiana Department of Education. ■ AYP determinations are required by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Blank areas denote that the Indiana Department of Education concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in the particular category for this school. The Indiana Department of Education also concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in other subgroups (e.g., Hispanic, Limited English Proficient, or Special Education) for any of the Mayor-sponsored charter schools; thus these categories are not included in this figure. Attendance Rate determination is only made for "All Students," not for subgroups. ■ <sup>1</sup>To meet AYP goals, 95% of eligible students must participate in testing.

# ARE STUDENTS MAKING ADEQUATE AND SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OVER TIME?

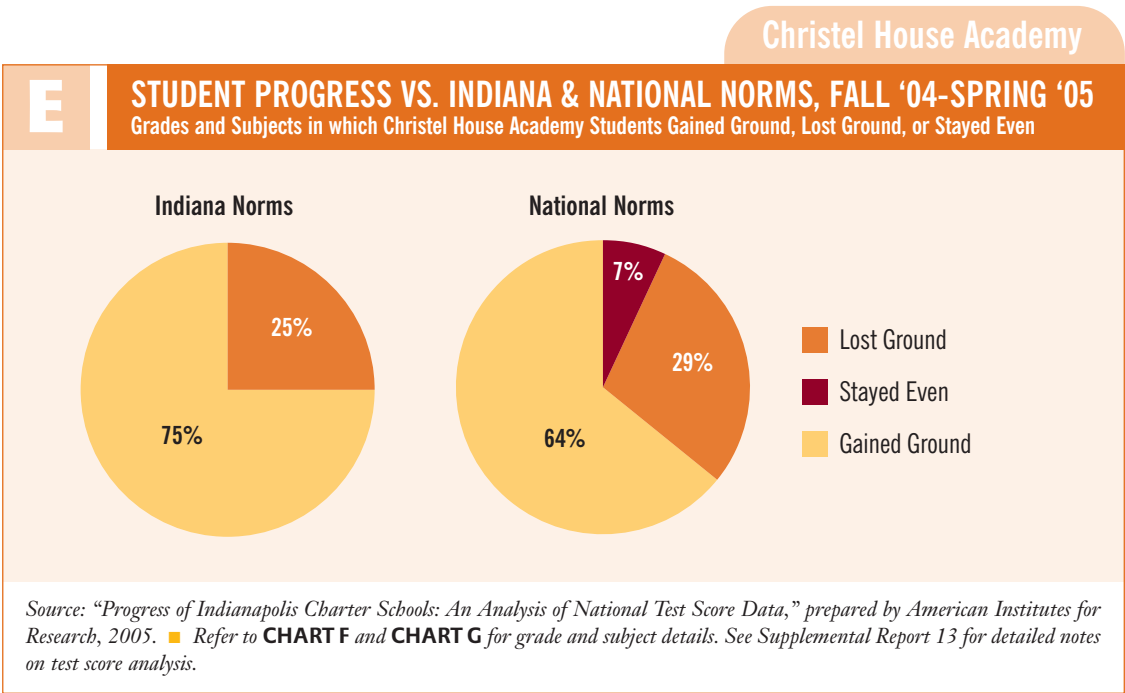
Charter schools administered the highly-regarded Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading, math, and language in both the fall and the spring. American Institutes for Research (AIR), a major nonprofit research organization, analyzed the results for the Mayor’s Office to answer two questions about how much students learned over the course of the 2004-05 academic year:

- Did students gain ground, lose ground, or stay even relative to their peers nationally and in Indiana?
- What proportion of students made sufficient progress to reach proficiency over time?

## Comparative Gains: How much did Christel House Academy students improve relative to their peers?

AIR was able to compare the average gains of students at CHA with those of

students across Indiana (■ **CHART F**) and the US (■ **CHART G**). The figures show where CHA students gained ground, lost ground, or stayed even relative to their peers. As the pie charts below show, CHA students gained ground relative to their Indiana peers in nine out of twelve (75%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART E**). They gained ground relative to their national peers in nine out of fourteen (64%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART E**).



## ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Christel House Academy vs. Indiana Norms (IN), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Christel House Academy Gains vs. IN Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	IN Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	15.2	-			
2nd Grade Reading	18.5	-			
2nd Grade Language	19.5	-			
3rd Grade Math	11.2	10.6	0.6		
3rd Grade Reading	11.4	9.0	2.4		
3rd Grade Language	11.0	8.5	2.5		
4th Grade Math	5.6	8.8			-3.2
4th Grade Reading	7.4	6.8	0.6		
4th Grade Language	9.6	5.8	3.8		
5th Grade Math	12.7	9.0	3.7		
5th Grade Reading	9.1	5.9	3.2		
5th Grade Language	11.7	5.2	6.5		
6th Grade Math	8.2	9.1			-0.9
6th Grade Reading	3.5	5.3			-1.8
6th Grade Language	5.0	4.1	0.9		

**How to Read this Figure:** The fourth row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 3rd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 3rd grade students at CHA made an average gain of 11.2 points, compared to 10.6 points for the average IN student. These students “gained ground” compared to the average IN student because their average gains were 0.6 points higher.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.



## ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Christel House Academy vs. National Norms (US), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	Christel House Academy Gains vs. US Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	US Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	15.2	15.7			-0.5
2nd Grade Reading	18.5	14.9	3.6		
2nd Grade Language	19.5	-			
3rd Grade Math	11.2	11.8			-0.6
3rd Grade Reading	11.4	10.4	1.0		
3rd Grade Language	11.0	9.3	1.7		
4th Grade Math	5.6	8.9			-3.3
4th Grade Reading	7.4	7.4		0.0	
4th Grade Language	9.6	6.5	3.1		
5th Grade Math	12.7	8.8	3.9		
5th Grade Reading	9.1	6.3	2.8		
5th Grade Language	11.7	5.8	5.9		
6th Grade Math	8.2	8.1	0.1		
6th Grade Reading	3.5	5.3			-1.8
6th Grade Language	5.0	4.5	0.5		

**How to Read this Figure:** The first row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 2nd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 2nd grade students at CHA made an average gain of 15.2 points, compared to 15.7 points for the average US student. These students “lost ground” compared to the average US student because their average gains were 0.5 points lower.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

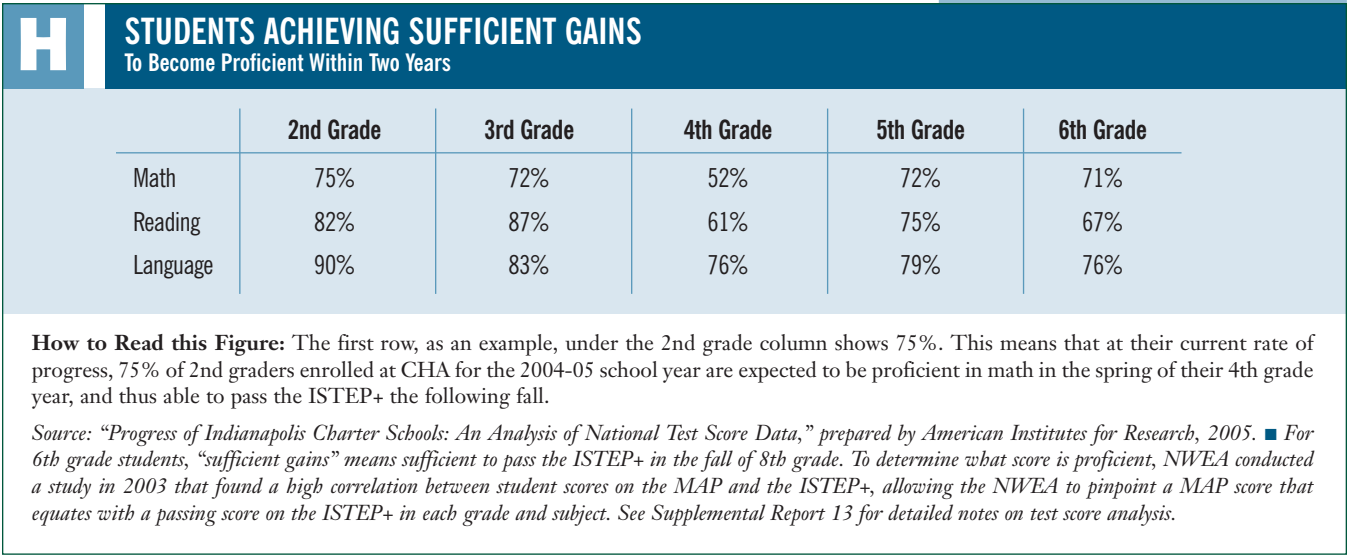
**Sufficient Gains: What proportion of students is on track to reach proficiency?**

AIR projected each CHA student's *future* MAP test score based on the gain he or she achieved between fall 2004 and spring 2005. If the student continued to gain at the same rate, would he or she be

proficient in the subject within two years, and therefore able to pass the ISTEP+ the following fall? If so, he or she made "sufficient gains." This year's standard for "sufficient gains" is considerably higher than in last year's report, in which AIR counted a student's gains as "sufficient" if the student would become proficient by

8th grade – a relatively long time horizon for younger students. This year, the analysis projects out no more than two years for any student. AIR calculated the percentage of students who made sufficient gains in each subject and grade. ■ **CHART H** displays the results.

Christel House Academy



# IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RUN?

## Is the school in sound fiscal health?

The Mayor’s Office commissioned an outside accounting firm to review each school’s finances. The accounting firm reported that CHA managed its financial practices satisfactorily during the past year, with no significant problems. Supplemental Report 11 contains financial statements and a summary of the school’s finances.

According to the expert site visit team, “all constituents report that the school is in sound fiscal health due to the support and philanthropy of the Christel DeHaan Foundation. The school facility is very adequate and an addition to the building is underway, staff continue to be added as needed, and classrooms are observed to have sufficient materials and supplies.”

The Indiana State Board of Accounts (ISBA) completed an audit of CHA’s 2002-03 school year in May 2004; results were not available in time to be included in last year’s Accountability Report. The ISBA found that CHA’s financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the cash and investment balances and cash receipts and disbursements for the year ending June 30, 2003.

## Are the school’s student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?

The school’s attendance rate was 93.4% in 2004-05 (■ **CHART I**), a slight decrease from 94.8% in 2003-04. According to the expert site visit team, CHA “has developed an aggressive plan for ensuring high levels of attendance which includes daily phone calls to the families of absent students, a partnership with Marion County Juvenile Justice which... [issues] parent notification letters that require a conference and contract, and periodic follow-up reports to Truancy Court. The school also provides monthly incentives for student attendance.”

The site team commended the school leader for the school’s exemplary practice of preparing a weekly enrollment and recruitment report. The team reported that CHA has also undertaken significant efforts to maintain enrollment and attract its target population of students via mass mailings to select zip codes, English- and Spanish-language ads in local newspapers, advertisements on the radio, and providing transportation to about half of its students.

## Is the school’s Board active and competent in its oversight?

The Mayor’s Office conducted governance reviews of CHA’s Board by attending a quarterly Board meeting and reviewing the Board meeting minutes for the 2004-05 school year. During the school year, the school’s Board met quarterly. A review of the school’s Board meeting minutes revealed that the Board engaged in discussions about important issues at the school. The Board meeting minutes convey the discussions in a concise but thorough manner. Observations at one of the school’s Board meetings showed that the Board is very interested in understanding the academic assessments the school uses to measure student achievement. Board members asked penetrating questions and were clearly engaged in the process for holding the school accountable.

The expert site visit team found that CHA “has an involved Board that is active and competent in its oversight. The Board includes members with expertise in education, education management, law, human resources, finance, and educational assessment.” Several of the parents interviewed by the team, however, were unaware that there is parent representation on the Board; the site team suggested that the school improve communications with parents about the Board, including the presence of parents on the Board and the schedule and location of quarterly Board meetings. In the satisfaction survey, the Board was among the features of the school receiving the fewest positive rankings – only 41% of parents rated it “excellent” or “very good” (■ **CHART L**).

### Christel House Academy

#### ATTENDANCE RATE IN 2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

	Attendance Rate
Christel House Academy	93.4%
Indianapolis Public Schools	94.2%
All Indiana Public Schools	95.9%

Source: Indiana Department of Education website, preliminary figures.

Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?

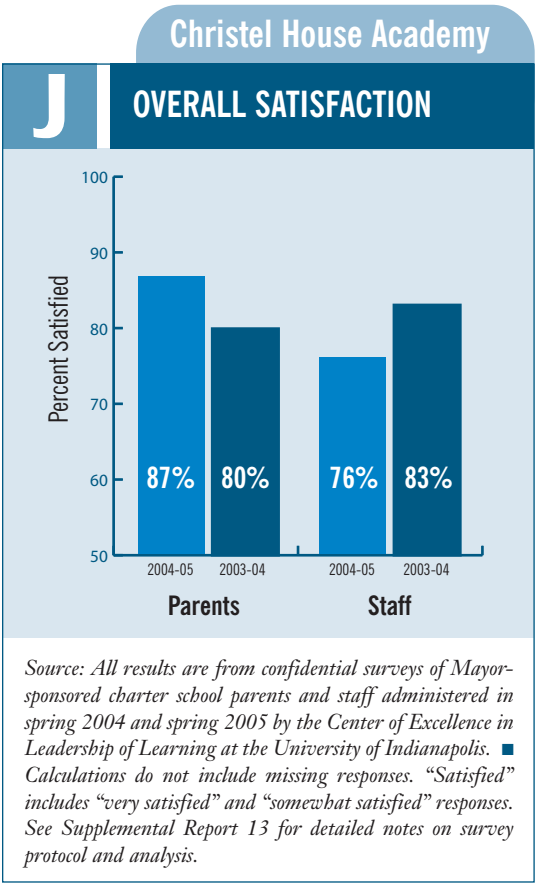
Overall, 87% of CHA parents indicated that they were satisfied with the school, up from 80% in the 2003-2004 school year (■ CHART J). ■ CHART K shows that a similar percentage (86%) of parents plan to return to the school next year, and 78% of parents indicated that they are likely to recommend the school to others. The percent of staff who said that they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the school decreased from 83% in 2003-04 to 76% in 2004-05. While 81% of staff surveyed planned to

return to CHA, only 53% said that they would recommend the school to others (■ CHART K).

■ CHART L shows how well parents and staff rated specific features of the school. The top-rated features for both parents and staff are highlighted in blue; the lowest-rated features are highlighted in crimson. Over three-quarters of the parents (78%) and staff (76%) surveyed rated the overall quality of education as either “excellent” or “very good.” The school features most frequently identified as “excellent” or “very good” by parents were the opportunities for parental

involvement and the school’s facilities. Staff also reported satisfaction with the quality of teaching (91%) and the faculty (88%). Parents and staff gave the fewest positive ratings to the school’s transportation services.

In the expert site team’s focus groups, parents indicated they are pleased with most aspects of the school. Parents remarked to the team that the school was “structured,” “disciplined” and focused on academics, and that the staff “encourages parent involvement to help achievement.”



Christel House Academy

**K** PARENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE LIKELY TO...

	Parents	Staff
Recommend the school to friends and colleagues	78%	53%
Return to the school next year	86%	81%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations include “extremely likely” and “very likely” responses. Calculations do not include missing responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.


## Christel House Academy


L

### PARENTS AND STAFF EVALUATION

Excellent/Very Good Responses of Select Features

	Parents	Staff
Overall quality of education	78%	76%
Quality of teaching/instruction	67%	91%
Curriculum/academic program	64%	52%
Individualized student attention	59%	36%
Access to/use of computers and other technologies	67%	55%
School material and supplies	56%	18%
Classroom management	55%	30%
Student-teacher ratio/class size	53%	15%
Services provided to special needs students <sup>1</sup>	57%	30%
Support services (e.g., counseling, healthcare, inc.)	47%	38%
Opportunities for parental involvement	74%	42%
Communication about student learning/achievement	68%	64%
Communication about meeting the school's mission	54%	44%
Teacher professional development	63%	53%
Faculty/teachers	64%	88%
School administration	51%	33%
School board	41%	44%
School facilities	70%	64%
Food service	39%	36%
Transportation services	37%	21%
Enrollment/admission process	56%	27%
School size	61%	40%
School safety	62%	58%
School location	64%	30%

 Highest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

 Lowest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Individual features with the highest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in blue; features with the lowest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in crimson. "Excellent" and "very good" responses are on a five-point scale (scale also includes "good," "fair," and "poor"). Calculations do not include missing and "don't know" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis. ■ <sup>1</sup>Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

### **Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?**

In 2004-05, CHA contracted with Edison Schools to manage the academic and operational aspects of the school. The Principal, hired by the school's Board and Edison Schools, resigned in February 2005. As she did during the 2003-04 school year, the school's Superintendent acted as interim Principal for the remainder of the school year. In constituent interviews with the site team, the departure of the Principal was described as disruptive. Nonetheless, the expert site visit team commended CHA for several efforts that maintained

continuity at the school despite the turnover, including: the Superintendent's interim leadership; the presence of "houses," or grade-level teacher-led teams; and the ongoing relationship with Edison Schools for curriculum and professional development support. The Mayor's Office's governance reviews found that the school was able to maintain a consistent environment during this transition period and completed the school year successfully. As of this report's release, CHA and Edison Schools continue to look for a Principal for the school.

While the short-term continuity was commended, parents in focus groups expressed great concern over another

school leader leaving. The site visit team reported the identification and retention of a leader as CHA's highest priority. The site team recommended that the school consider involving parents in the search process, and provide more information to parents about the staffing decisions when it involves key staff.

In 2004-05, the school added a Business Manager to the administrative team. This position is responsible for many of the school's compliance-related duties. The addition of the Business Manager allowed other staff members to focus more on academic issues.

## **IS THE SCHOOL MEETING ITS OPERATIONS AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO:**

**organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?**

CHA satisfactorily met its obligations in 2004-05 in complying with relevant laws and regulations and in providing access to students across Indianapolis. Neither the Mayor's Office's internal systems nor the expert site visit team indicated any significant concerns related to these obligations. CHA did, however, have difficulty meeting the IDOE reporting requirement to submit the second count of Average Daily Membership (ADM) in December 2004 in a timely manner. In general, however, CHA satisfactorily maintained the compliance binder, which contains all of the school's governance, management and organizational documents and is reviewed by the Mayor's Office on a monthly basis, in 2004-05.

The site visit team characterized the school as having "an adequate instructional staff with appropriate qualifications" and an organizational structure that works well. The site team noted that the school added seven new staff positions in 2004-05, based on identified student needs.

The team described CHA's physical plant as exemplary, with spacious classrooms and clean, well-maintained buildings. School leaders reported that the enrollment process was conducted in a fair manner, and that the school maintains a waiting list to fill spots as they become available. Roughly half of the students ride the school's three bus routes, which

cover a sixteen-mile radius from the school. Some parents, however, commented in focus groups that they had to drive long distances to get to the bus stops. On the satisfaction survey, transportation services received low marks from both parents and staff (■ CHART L).

Several of the staff interviewed by the team expressed a need for more instructional support for the special education population. The team recommended that the school leadership consider how well this population is served by the existing curriculum, along with those gifted students who are working above grade level.

# IS THE SCHOOL PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

## Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

According to the site team, “all stakeholders understand and support the school’s mission” to provide an outstanding education – characterized by high standards, rigor, and accountability – to underserved students.

In the survey of CHA parents and staff, greater than half of the surveyed parents (54%) and 44% of staff members gave “excellent” or “very good” ratings to communication about the school’s mission (■ **CHART L**).

## Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

All staff interviewed by the site team found the Edison Schools’ curriculum and supporting materials to be either satisfactory or very satisfactory. Teachers also reported that the relationship with Edison Schools brought a “new level of consistency and continuity” to the school’s curriculum. Teachers highlighted several curriculum areas as particularly strong and effective, including: reading blocks, Open Court reading, core values focus, Spanish, physical education/wellness, and art. Additionally, the team reported that CHA has a strong enrichment program including clubs, field trips, academic competitions, community learning and service, and a much-improved media center.

Several teachers reported that technology problems prohibited the school from using online supplements to the Edison Schools’ curriculum. The site team also recommended that the school conduct a systematic review of the curriculum’s effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement.

## Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

The expert site visit team commended CHA for its “particularly strong assessment system that includes using Edison Schools’ benchmarks, NWEA

testing, ISTEP+ testing, and Open Court reading assessments.” Moreover, the team found that teachers described CHA’s instructional approach as data-driven, reflecting the training that teachers have had in the use of data from assessments to guide instruction. Several teachers told the team that they benefited from assessment training (e.g., NWEA, Edison Schools’ benchmarks) which has improved their use of data and ability to develop more complex lesson plans.

The staff also told the team that assessment data enables them to provide individualized learning, since information is available on the needs and/or progress of each student. The expert site visit team observed that in “the majority of classroom teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable about student needs, so that they are able to design learning for small groups and for individuals.” Of particular note, the team also found that teachers share data and set goals with individual students; the site team characterized this practice as “exemplary,” and urged CHA to share details with other schools.

Finally, the site team members observed that teachers use the Edison Schools’ curriculum planning tool to develop lesson plans aligned with the Indiana State Academic Standards.

## Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

The expert site visit team observed a school climate that is “friendly and inviting,” and described by parents and teachers as “safe and orderly,” “supportive,” and “caring.” The team noted that many examples of high-quality student work are featured throughout the building, and school benchmarks are prominently displayed in hallways. In team-conducted focus groups, teachers remarked about the “strong culture” that emphasizes core values and learning. Overall, teachers affirmed that they liked working at CHA, that they have the resources needed to teach their students, and that they like working in the grade-level house teams. Teachers participate in trainings by Edison Schools, and receive curriculum and

materials during the summer so they can be prepared when the new school year starts. The school’s focus on knowing students’ learning needs is also viewed positively. One teacher summed up the net result as such: “CHA teachers have developed a new level of professionalism” because of the high-quality work they are doing with students.

One area for improvement identified by the site team was a lack of a clear plan prioritizing teacher professional development needs. Several parents also mentioned concerns about in-class discipline. Teachers in the younger grades raised this concern as well, noting that CHA’s “guest policy” of sending students who misbehave to another classroom is not viewed as particularly effective. The team encouraged staff to consider ways to improve the effectiveness of this strategy and related discipline strategies.

Parents in site visit team focus groups reported ample opportunities to participate in the life of the school, including chaperoning activities and attending Parent Teacher Support Group (PTSG) meetings. This was also found to be a strong feature in the survey of CHA’s parents (■ **CHART L**); opportunities for parental involvement was among the highest-rated features of CHA.

Parents and teachers reported high levels of satisfaction when asked about the school’s facilities; 70% of parents and 64% of staff responded with either “excellent” or “very good.” Very few staff (15%) reported satisfaction with the school’s student-teacher ratio/class size (■ **CHART L**).

## Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school’s mission?

Citing information from 2004–05 as well as previous site visits, the expert team remarked that the school “has taken major strides in implementing their intended educational philosophy. Classroom observations show that teachers are implementing effective educational practices, using efficient teaching methods and focusing on core

academic subjects.” On classroom visits, the site team observed that teachers at CHA use the teaching approaches identified in its charter, such as evaluating incoming students to determine learning gaps, providing intensive tutoring and other remedial efforts, using engaging teaching methods, and offering a Life Skills and Enrichment program. During classroom visits, the team observed high levels of student engagement and challenging work in classroom settings.

Teachers specifically noted that they intentionally teach to “[Benjamin] Bloom’s higher levels” of thinking and that they actively consider this as they plan lessons.” Similarly, several teachers remarked that they “do not teach to the bottom of the class” and that they study student performance on benchmark tests, sharing those results with each student.

### **Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?**

Both parents and staff rated communication about student learning among the highest of all school features, with 68% of parents and 64% of staff ranking it either “excellent” or “very good.” As previously indicated, communication about meeting the school’s mission was considered “excellent” or “very good” by 54% of parents and 44% of staff.

The expert site visit team noted that “school staff provide information to parents via weekly work folders and reports, newsletters, parent organization meetings, flyers, parent workshops, and required parent conferences.” During focus groups conducted by the site team, parents identified several instances when

they did not receive timely and advance notice of upcoming events.

### **Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?**

Staff at the school indicated to the site team that the human resource system is adequate, and that new staff positions are appropriately focused on academics and support for student learning. Of the seven new positions added at CHA during the 2004-05 school year, six were academic positions.

Several staff at the school favorably mentioned that the school benefits from a full-time technology support person.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES**

*Source: The information below was provided by the school to the Mayor’s Office. It is included here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school’s programs and activities.*

### **Mission, philosophy, and educational program**

CHA’s mission is to be recognized as a provider of outstanding education to an underserved population and to maintain high standards of academic rigor, efficiency and accountability. CHA aims for its students to achieve the academic proficiency necessary for higher education. The school also strives to: equip students with the desire for lifelong learning; strengthen their civic, ethical and moral values; and prepare them to be self-sufficient, contributing members of society. The school expects every student to demonstrate mastery of English and mathematics, as well as proficiency in Spanish, which is taught to all students beginning in Kindergarten. The academic

program at CHA is based on educational research that supports beginning each day with the core academic subjects of reading, phonics, and mathematics. CHA believes these subjects are the foundation of a child’s learning and the key to progress throughout his or her education and lifetime. At CHA, students spend additional time in the latter part of the school day reviewing the day’s lessons and practicing the skills acquired that day to help them better retain knowledge.

CHA works in partnership with Edison Schools to deliver a research-based curriculum and to continuously assess student achievement. CHA uses the Orton Gillingham method for phonics instruction, a multi-sensory approach first developed by the Dyslexia Institute that

has proven successful for children with skill deficits. In 2004-05 CHA adopted the Open Court reading curriculum for all grades; Edison Schools provided teacher training on this curriculum. This program is designed to serve the needs of children with a range of reading skills, as is the case with the school’s diverse student population. CHA’s mathematics curriculum, Everyday Math, was developed by the University of Chicago School Math Project. The curriculum applies mathematics lessons to real world situations and builds comprehension by re-teaching concepts and skills throughout the year and across grade levels. CHA also offers full-day Kindergarten for all students.

## Academic programs and initiatives

- **Step Up to Writing.** This program, developed by Edison Schools, is used in all grades and subjects to teach a consistent writing process throughout the school. Students use a structured, color-coded writing process to organize sentences, paragraphs, essays, and longer reports. Staff members receive on-going professional development to refine how they teach writing skills.

### CONCURSO ACADEMICO

CHA 6th grade students participated in the Concurso Academico this spring. The Concurso Academico is a statewide Spanish language academic contest. Students competed in pronunciation, poster, piñata and trivia competitions. This was the first academic competition outside of the school in which CHA students participated. Three individual students received awards in the competition, and the 6th grade class placed 4th overall. Many of the students in the 6th grade class had never taken a Spanish class before they enrolled at CHA.

- **Behavior and Social Skills Development.** CHA uses the “responsive classroom approach” to connect social and academic learning in the school. Through this approach, students are taught the behavioral and social skills necessary to ensure that they can focus on academic learning. For example, the school conveys to students consistent and clear rules about how to enter the classroom, communicate with teachers and other students, and behave appropriately while riding the school bus. In the first two weeks of school, students learn these rules and behaviors through role-playing and practice. Throughout the year, teachers reinforce these skills and school-wide expectations through practice and by modeling appropriate behavior.
- **Character Education.** Character First is a character development and life skills program that integrates character lessons within all core subject classes. Each month the school adopts a different skill or value; teachers include these topics in their daily lessons. Character First provides sample lessons that teachers can use. The school also begins each day with a thought-provoking message from Project Wisdom. The messages, rich in biography and history, are read over the school’s public address system to build character, confidence and community. The program encourages students to reflect upon the meaning of civic service and personal values and the application of those values in their daily lives.
- **Spirit Stick.** To provide recognition for student achievement, a “Spirit Stick” is awarded each week to the class that best displays a positive attitude, models the school’s values, and works together as a team. Students earn points for attendance, academic success, being on time in classes, wearing uniforms, good behavior, and living up to the school’s core values. In addition to receiving points for their class, individual students obtaining high numbers of points are recognized with Gold, Silver, and Bronze stars.
- **Technology-Based Curriculum and Assessment Management.** Teachers use the electronic Plato Learning System and Plato’s TeachMaster to ensure that curricular content and instructional strategies are consistent across classrooms. Students take daily, weekly and monthly assessments using Plato, allowing teachers to frequently monitor and report on student proficiency and progress. Students use Plato three times each week to practice math and reading, as well as to apply content skills to interactive activities through Plato’s Projects for the Real World. TeachMaster is used by teachers to create lesson plans for individual students and classes that are aligned to the curriculum. Data collected through Plato is used for instructional planning to improve student learning.
- **Benchmark Assessments.** Students’ reading and math skills in second grade and higher are assessed monthly using an on-line Benchmark

Assessment system provided by Edison Schools that is aligned to the Indiana State Academic Standards. Immediate feedback allows teachers and students to monitor mastery of skills and redirect instructional focus as needed.

## Parent involvement

- **Parent Support.** The school’s PTSG meets monthly to promote open communication between teachers, administrators, and parents. PTSG activities in 2004-05 included a skating party fundraiser, a Mother’s Day fundraiser, school dances, a live animal show intended to interest students in biology, and the collection of box tops redeemable for educational resources for the school. Parents also volunteer at CHA to assist teachers in classroom preparation and to chaperone field trips.
- **Parent Workshops.** The school organizes monthly parent workshops after school and on weekends, held at school and at nearby community locations. Parents are surveyed to determine their interests. The topics of recent workshops included domestic violence, cleaning up bad credit, first time home ownership, teen sexuality and reproductive health, drug awareness, and gang awareness.

## Supplemental programs and activities

- **After-School Clubs.** On Tuesday afternoons, CHA students in grades two through six participate in after-school clubs such as Cooking with Chefs, K-Kids, Garden Club, Volleyball, Basketball, Running, Math Club, Computer Club, and Book Club.
- **K-Kids Community Service Club.** K-Kids, a youth program of Kiwanis International, is a student-led community service organization with a chapter at CHA. Service-learning activities from the past year included fundraisers to benefit Riley Children’s Hospital and a fundraiser to benefit Tsunami victims.
- **Service Learning.** Students in all classes at CHA plan, implement, and participate in service learning activities

such as recycling, visiting local nursing homes, serving dinner at a local mission, and focusing attention on important world causes.

- **Before- and After-School Care.** CHA provides before- and after-school care at a minimal cost for children whose parents are working during these times. Students read, receive homework help, and participate in academic enrichment activities.

### Community partnerships and donations

- **Indiana Fever.** As part of the Read to Achieve program sponsored by the WNBA, players and coaches from the Indiana Fever professional women's basketball team met with students several times during the school year to promote and encourage reading.
- **Health Services.** A free on-campus health clinic with a full-time school nurse is operated by Learning Well through a grant from Community Hospitals Indianapolis. Learning Well is a nonprofit organization supported by the Health Foundation of Greater Indianapolis that operates school-based health clinics throughout Marion County. Additionally, two staff members from Cummins Mental Health have offices on-site to provide students with counseling and other mental health services. Cummins services are covered through family health insurance and/or sliding scale fees.
- **Cooking with Chefs.** This group of local Indianapolis chefs came to CHA to teach children how to safely cook nutritious meals. The chefs offered their program one afternoon per week, after school, for six weeks.

### Staffing

- **Professional Development.** CHA teachers receive fifteen professional development days throughout the school year, nearly three times the national average. On-site training is provided by national education consultants and Edison Schools' Academic Achievement Advisors, including topics such as instructional strategies, classroom management, and

the use of data to drive instruction. All CHA teachers attended the Edison Schools Teaching Academies in Las Vegas over the summer to learn about the Open Court reading curriculum and other aspects of the Edison Schools educational design.

- **Data-Driven Decision-Making.** An experienced Edison Schools Academic Achievement Advisor works with the teachers to ensure that they use assessment data to measure student progress towards the school's learning goals and objectives. Regular site visits by the Advisor ensure that assessment data is analyzed consistently across the school, and that school- and classroom-level decisions on improving student achievement are based on the data. The teaching staff works one day each week during house and team meetings to discuss student progress and meets monthly with an additional educational consultant who helps them to use data to improve instruction.

### School management

The Superintendent of CHA, Dr. Michelle Thompson, is responsible for day-to-day management and operation of the school. She keeps the Board informed on educational, student achievement, managerial, fiscal and other matters and helps the Board achieve its oversight responsibilities.

The school was created by Christel House, Inc., an Indianapolis-based philanthropic organization that operates children's orphanages and schools in impoverished regions around the world. Christel House, Inc. assists the school with fundraising and provides continuity of leadership.

### School governance

CHA Board members bring a wide array of experience and knowledge in the area of education, law, finance, marketing, human resources and business management. The Board's responsibility is to: ensure that the philosophy and mission of the school are followed and the terms of the management contract are met; monitor student performance and the school's efforts to meet performance standards; approve and

monitor annual budgets, operating plans, and operational performance; support school management, parents, teachers, and students in making the school a superior learning experience; ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability; establish policies which help the school achieve its mission and educational program; and enhance the school's public image by serving as the school's ambassadors, advocates and community representatives.

### TSUNAMI MEMORIAL VIGIL

CHA held a Tsunami Memorial Vigil in memory of the lives lost and affected by the disaster in Asia. Parents and other community members attended this event, held on the same day in each of the five other Christel House Learning Centers around the world. The school collaborated in organizing this event with The Orchard School, a local private school with which CHA recently began a partnership centered on community service and other initiatives. Students in the K-Kids club wrote letters to legislative representatives, business leaders, and government officials inviting them to attend the event. Each grade level researched the Tsunami and presented three facts about the disaster at the memorial. Students designed a quilt with stories and drawings about the Tsunami and lit candles to represent the number of total lives lost in the disaster. This event was the first of a series of global service learning initiatives at CHA.

### Facilities

CHA is located on Indianapolis' south side. In addition to classrooms and administrative offices, the school has a multipurpose room that also serves as a gymnasium and a cafeteria, recreational fields, and an outdoor nature lab. During summer 2005, CHA added a junior academy wing to the existing building to accommodate the addition of 7th and 8th grades over the next two years. The school plans to add soccer fields, a full-size track, and softball diamonds.